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Customer Service at the Stamford Station — an 'Ambassador' But Not Proper Signage: Cameron on Transportation

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Date : September 1, 2019

Anthony Scasino is an ambassador, not for a foreign country, but for Metro-North. He doesn't have a consulate or embassy, just the Stamford train station as his headquarters.

Scasino is one of six Customer Service Ambassadors (CSA) who work at the railroad's busiest stations — White Plains, Harlem, 125th Street, Fordham, New Rochelle, Croton-Harmon and Stamford. After a six-

month trial, the CSA program is now permanent and may be expanded.

Scasino has worked for Metro-North for six and a half years, having previously been a ticket agent at Stamford. Now he dons a bright blue and yellow vest emblazoned with “Customer Service” on the back and helps customers in the main concourse and on the platforms.

“I really like helping people,” he says. “I hold doors open, give people directions...anything they need help with, even their luggage.”

When Scasino starts his shift at 6 a.m., the station is already busy with commuters heading into New York.

Though some have recently complained about the homeless camping out overnight in the waiting area, Scasino says he leaves that issue to the security team and a social services agency, [BRC](#), which is hired by the MTA to get the homeless off the benches and into appropriate shelters.

But a [recent report](#) by the Office of the New York State Comptroller says the \$14 million spent by MTA on homeless outreach has been a failure.

Unlike Grand Central Terminal, which closes each night from 2 to 5:30 a.m., the Stamford station remains open 24 hours for cleaning and the few passengers catching Amtrak’s overnight trains.

Scasino sees a lot of regular commuters each morning who greet him on their way to the tracks. In one case, he actually saved a blind woman on an escalator from a nasty fall.

Cameron on Metro-North:

- [What It’s Like to Be an Engineer Operating Metro-North Trains — Cameron on Transportation](#) (June 24)
- [Is It Worth Building a Monorail Along the Merritt? — Cameron on Transportation](#) (May 31)
- [Metro-North Timetable Showing It’s Age: You’d Be Slower Too If You Dated Back to the Woodrow Wilson Presidency](#) (April 27)
- [Finding Parking for Your Train Commute — Now There’s an App for That: Cameron on Transportation](#) (April 8)
- [Wi-Fi on Trains Should Wait — Coming 5G Will Make Current Wi-Fi Obsolete: Cameron on Transportation](#) (March 14)

At some hours, there is a lot of crowding on the Stamford platforms as trains arrive, unloading passengers while others wait to board, but Scasino says he’s never seen anything too dangerous.

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“Commuters are pretty sharp,” he says. “They know to stay back from the platform edge. That’s why we have that yellow warning strip.”

And they know exactly where to position themselves on the platform to be near the train’s door when it opens, giving them quick access to limited seating.

A CSA is important in Stamford since the station is confusing and still lacks adequate signage. For example, there is no local map posted for people to see the station in relation to downtown and how to get there.

Years ago, when Swiss Bank was still active in Stamford, I remember seeing nattily dressed businessmen arrive on trains from New York and make their way to the taxi stand. As they entered the cab, they’d say “Swiss Bank, please,” and off they’d go for two blocks and about a \$10 fare even while the bank’s headquarters were just 250 yards from the station.

Arrive by train at the smallest village in Europe and there’s always a map in the station as a guide. But not in Stamford. Still, that isn’t Metro-North’s fault. Blame the state Department of Transportation, which owns and runs the station.

Scasino only works a morning shift, but there may be plans to expand the ambassadors’ coverage to afternoon rush hours and even weekends. Clearly, the railroad is working hard to improve its image and the service they provide, especially to new riders and visitors.

Jim Cameron has been a Darien resident for more than 25 years. He is the founder of the [Commuter Action Group](#), sits on the [Merritt Parkway Conservancy](#) board and also serves on the Darien RTM and as program director for Darien TV79. The opinions expressed in this column, republished with permission of Hearst CT Media, are only his own. You can reach him at CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com.